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Dedicated to Janaki's mother

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About the book

The stanzas based on the Ramayana presents the most prominent characters associated with the great story. Shiva and his love for Rama, the great characters of Jatayu, Garuda, Sampati, Uma, Sugreeva, Hanuman and Kakabhushundi make the story so very dear to us.

About the author

Bharat Bhushan

Environment Scientist, Ornithologist. Birder, Birdwatcher, Teacher, Trainer. Eclectic and Serendipitous Vagrant Traveller. On land, through books, inside the internet, and deep within the mind.

twas but to live it out with pain and sorrow,
on this earth, from heaven, came the lotus-eyed,
upon need, they knew to help, Rudra and Rama,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Among the many *avatars* of Vishnu, it is only the *avatar* of Rama that has all the aspects of a human persona. During the Vamana *avatar*, Vishnu has knowledge of himself as a supreme being, while as the Rama *avatar*, he has taken it upon himself to undergo the life of a human being without pre-knowledge of himself as a deity. Shiva counsels Vishnu and cautions him, that it would be difficult to live life as a human on Earth, and to carry the burdens of all pain and sorrow that humans have to face.

Vishnu denies himself the luxury of being able to live like a deity on Earth, while in his *avatar* of Rama. It is thus said, that the very moment that the purpose of the *avatar* was completed, upon the killing of Ravana, the deity ceases to be, and the aspects of human failure come to torment Rama. He insists upon the trial by fire for Sita, and later upon return to Ayodhya, he asks Lakshmana to accompany her to Valmiki's ashram and return alone.

Shiva had provided the *Sudarshana Chakra* to Vishnu and he could have easily used it to kill Ravana, but that was not to be. He descends from heaven, as a human.

Ravana was recognized as the greatest devotee of Shiva and his most favoured. He had proven his devotion by cutting off and offering each one of his ten heads to Shiva, who returned them to him with several boons of super weapons and super power. But, he had become too arrogant and had challenged the gods and right living. He had to be destroyed. Only Vishnu could do it.

But, Vishnu had decided to go and live among the humans as one, without any understanding or knowledge about being a deity. Shiva, increasing his devotion for Vishnu, began to seek Rama and recite his name.

he would be born in Ayodhya, Garuda heard,
Kakabhushundi say thus, to all birds at Manasa,
ready to travel, happy, Maheshwara to Sarayu,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

It is accepted over these many thousands of years that the Ramayana was first written down by Maharshi Valmiki, after he had heard it from the divine sage Narada, on the instructions from Brahma. The great poet, Tulsidas, conveys in the Ramacharitamanas, that before the epic was written, Shiva etches the story from within him, in a great telling to Parvati. This is the Adhyatma Ramayana.

And, Shiva had heard it while Kakabhushundi, the crow-sage, recited the entire epic to Garuda and all the birds assembled at the holy lake, Manasarovar. This is the first of all, the Kakabhushundi Ramayana.

Thus, the Adhyatma Ramayana and the Kakabhushundi Ramayana were both conveyed before the birth of Rama, from the abilities of Shiva and the crow-sage to see into the events that were to unfold.

Later, comes the moment, when the *avatar* of Rama is to be born into the household of Dasaratha, at Ayodhya, and Shiva is excited that his beloved Vishnu, is to start on his human aspect. He is keen to see the birth of Rama, and to be present at that moment, and take part in the festivities and joy that would come upon the city.

Similarly, the sage-crow, Kakabhushundi, is also keen and happy to know that the moment is about and he would be blessed to be there, and to see the infant Rama, which would actually be, the infant Vishnu. None present at Ayodhya would perhaps ever know that they were witnessing or were present at the birth of Vishnu, and would not be as thrilled. But, as the sage-crow is told by Shiva, all the people at Ayodhya would be blessed tremendously, for it was Vishnu who would be born in the great city, on the banks of the river Sarayu, which would now be sacred forever.

It is time, we should go, he is to be born, in Ayodhya,
O Bhushundi, come, we hasten, we may be there before,
I, Hara, need help, fly, see Rama, tell me, on Navami,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Shiva was excited to be able to join in the festivities at Ayodhya during the birth of Vishnu, as Rama. His love for Vishnu, as Rama, was already imbibed deep within him, within his *Adhyatma*, and he knew the entire story of Rama's life on earth. He had been thrilled about it, when Vishnu had decided to descend as an *avatar* in an entirely human aspect.

The time was imminent, that he would be born on *navami* at Ayodhya, and he wanted to travel from Kailasa and be present at the moment of his birth. He had decided to disguise himself as a poor mendicant and wander about the streets of the city, taking in the charity from the people. Ayodhya would be blessed already, for Rama was to be born, and Shiva wanted to add to the blessings of the city.

He knew his limitations, for he had been told by Vishnu that there would be no scope for him to intervene as a deity, and he could only do so, when specifically asked for. As a poor mendicant, he would not be permitted inside the palace, and he would have to stay somewhere nearby. But, he could break the rules, if he had to, thought Shiva. He would take Kakabhushundi, the sage-crow with him to Ayodhya. He would fly inside the palace and witness the birth of Rama.

Crows were everywhere, and nobody would notice that there was something amiss. One more crow was nothing that anybody would be worried about. This was a curse and a blessing to Kakabhushundi from Shiva in an earlier time. He had been cursed that he would be born again and again as a crow, and would only feed upon leftovers. Upon his request for a blessing, Shiva had blessed him that in each of his birth, he would be able to participate in an aspect of the *avatar* of Rama.

Away! away from Ayodhya, his people, faith, their love,
Mithila Princess and a Prince, beloved Lakshmana,
Promises, O Rama, O Dasaratha, being away, just so?
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

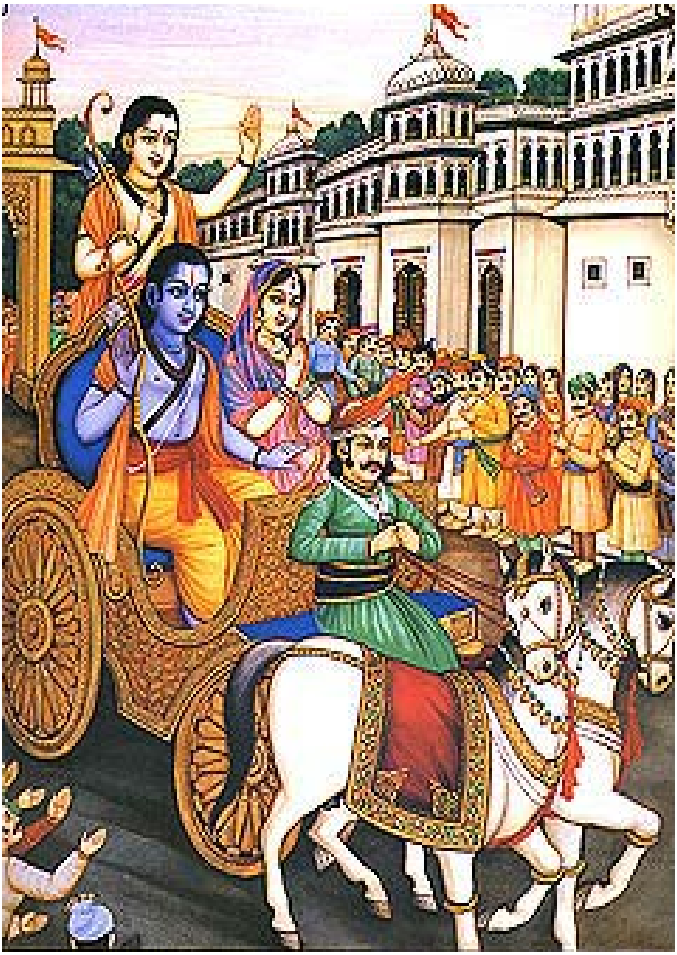
Dasaratha had been keen to see that his eldest son, Rama, was crowned King of Ayodhya, while he was as yet alive and in good health. It was time, and the people loved the young prince. He had proven his ability to lead them in war and in peace. None could have been better than him, even amongst his brothers, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrugna, who were born of the same blessing given to Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi.

The traumatic events of his placating Kaikeyi and her seeking redemption of long-given promises had led to the tragic exile of Rama and Dasaratha was heart broken. He exclaimed that he was promise-bound to Kaikeyi, but why did Rama have to be so obedient to his father? Could he not have disobeyed him, this one time?

A fact that is rarely mentioned in the Ramayana, and amongst devotees, is that Sita and her three sisters, from Mithila, daughters of the powerful king Janaka, had married Rama and his three brothers. The great kingdoms of Ayodhya and Mithila had come together and today, the fragile princess of Mithila was ready to accompany Rama in his exile. Dasaratha was torn apart.

This was not Rama's exile alone. His second son, Lakshmana, ever faithful to Rama, was going with him, living his wife behind in Ayodhya. That would also be a disaster. Why did Lakshmana, a Prince of a great Kingdom, and why did Sita, a Princess, daughter of the great Janaka, have to be so much in love with Rama?

One promise, O Rama, beseeched Dasaratha that did not require to be obeyed in such a manner. The people of Ayodhya would never hate Rama for going against his father, and Dasaratha would have kept his promise to Kaikeyi. O Rama, called out his father, why do you love me, so? I beg you, please, disobey me. Stay.



they would not return, so, go back, Sumanta, go back, here was Guha himself, with his boat, Sumanta, return, not to be sad, O Rama, Ayodhya awaits, I know, in tears, within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

The people of Ayodhya had been shocked by the news that their beloved Rama would not be King. Even more so, they were further dismayed by the news that Rama, Lakshmana and Sita would be away from Ayodhya, in exile, and would need to suffer the life of mendicants in the forests of other kingdoms.

Sumanta, the trusted minister of Dasaratha, loved Rama and had been looking forward to serving the future King. He had nothing against Bharata, but he knew that the Kingdom needed Rama. Over the past few years, the old King had not been paying attention to the people and the threats to the Kingdom had increased.

It was Sumanta who took on the charioteer's role and brought Rama, Lakshmana and Sita to the great river, Tamasa. Guha, the chieftain of the river-peoples, was present to receive Rama with all respect. Sumanta could not believe that the young prince would obey his father thus and forsake the greater good of the Kingdom and the love of his people.

He begged Rama to stay at the other side of the river, and that Guha and his people would be with him and provide all the comforts that he would need. After all, he would have obeyed his father, and would live the life of a mendicant, and would have gone out of Ayodhya.

Rama knew of Sumanta's love for him, and asked for him to return to Ayodhya. He did not want to tell him that he would not be settling in anywhere nearby. Rama spoke of Guha's love to Sumanta, and asked for him to leave aside his worries, and go back to the people of Ayodhya who needed him more. The people and his father, Dasaratha, would be in tears. So, go back, O Sumanta, said Rama, go back and tell the people that I am happy and content, for Guha is with me.

Go back, O Bharata, return, Ayodhya, our people,
Prince, will you not be King, O Dasaratha, in vain,
Your love and duty! You would have me barefoot?
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Rama loved his brothers dearly. He knew that Bharata was not aware of the plans and developments that had taken place at Ayodhya due to his mother, Kaikeyi, and her demands on Dasaratha. He would be very angry and distraught, and he would not accept the kingdom, and he would not be King in place of Rama. Lakshmana had grumbled that perhaps Bharata would be happy to be King. Rama had spoken to him, and reminded him that Bharata would be more loyal to his brothers, than be obedient to his mother.

As thought, Bharata had been very angry, but had to keep himself under control due to the passing of the great Dasaratha. He had to stay back and conduct the prayers and he had to ensure that there would be no doubt among the people and in the palace that only Rama would be King. For, Dasaratha was dead, and it would mean that Rama was free from his promise. All that Bharata had to do was bring him back to Ayodhya.

Rama disagreed with the invitation. A promise was a promise, and one that had been made to his father. He would not go back. And, Bharata could not claim his right to accompany him on exile, in a manner similar to Lakshmana. He would have to go back and be a King.

Of course, as everyone knows, Bharata disagreed and asked for Rama's footwear, so that he could place them on the throne, and be a custodian on behalf of his elder brother. It is thus, that Rama laments, O Dasaratha, all your intentions have been in vain, for Bharata would not be King. Did you have to fail in your promise because one of your sons would fail you? And, O Bharata, would you speak of your love for Rama, and your duty to the people of Ayodhya, and yet, you take my footwear, and leave me barefoot, to walk in these forests, in exile?

in acceptance of his father's wishes, in deep sorrow, away from Ayodhya, journeyed, he, Maryaada Rama, Shiva said to Uma, the fragile Sita walked along, within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

There are many instances of the conversation between Shiva and Parvati, in the manner in which knowledge has been conveyed to us from the many stories and aspects discussed at Kailasa. Several stotras include the mention that it was Shiva who conveyed the information to Parvati, and later it was written down by the author of the stanzas, such as the Rama Raksha Stotra.

It is similar in the manner in which Shiva conveyed the Adhyatma Ramayana to Parvati. She knows of the epic in the first instance of a story that is yet to happen. Later, she is curious. Did Vishnu actually go to live among the humans? Did goddess Mahalakshmi really go with Vishnu, and as Sita, did she actually give up all her comforts and go with Rama in exile, to live in the forests with all the hardships?

Yes, said Shiva to Parvati. Vishnu and Mahalakshmi did so, as Rama and Sita. They had agreed to live it out as humans, and live with all the burdens that would come with the decision. In deference to the promise made by Dasaratha to Kaikeyi, the young prince, Rama, had agreed to go and live in exile, with Lakshmana and Sita following him.

It was true, that the fragile princess of Mithila, had of her own, decided not to live in the comfort of the palace with Kausalya, or with her sisters, but had determined that she would walk, step in step with her beloved Rama in his entire exile and live with the troubles that would meet him. Parvati was perturbed, for after all, was Vishnu being so powerless, that he could be made to face so many troubles, despite being one of the most powerful deities. And could Shiva not do something about it all? Could he not go to Rama and help him avoid such difficulties?

testing Rama, confident of victory, Parvati faulted
In devotion, amidst Shakti and Shiva, he bowed,
Do not, O Uma, do not challenge Sitapati, as foretold,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Would Rama, as a human, be able to stay faithful to Sita when she had been abducted by Ravana? Parvati wondered and asked Shiva about her doubts. In his mind, in his repeated recitation of *raamanama*, Shiva had no doubt about his dedication to Rama. He knew of the ideals that Rama had established for himself, as the Prince of Ayodhya.

Sita had been abducted by Ravana, and Rama and Lakshmana were in search of her. They were unaware of what had happened to her. They were yet to meet up with Jatayu, and only then, would they get to know that it was Ravana who had abducted her.

Parvati decided to test Rama and find out for herself if Shiva's faith in the Vishnu *avatar* of Rama was well founded. Shiva cautioned Parvati and reminded her that Vishnu, as Rama, could not have been more perfect as a human being, and she, herself, the daughter of the Himalayas, was also human. Would she be able to resist Rama, he asked playfully. Challenged, thus, Parvati was upset. Was there a human that could be put up to compare with Maheshwara himself? She had to find out for herself. She came down to the Dandakaranya forest and test Rama and determine if she was steadfast.

Disguised as Sita, she came in front of Rama, who was moving about, alone, in search of his beloved. Expecting that she would be able to fool Rama, Parvati walked out to meet the prince of Ayodhya. Shiva, in doubt, followed her, quietly, and hid himself in the forest, to know if Parvati could be led to be smitten by Rama, as he was.

Seeing through her disguise, and seeing her entirely as *shakti*, Rama kneeled and offered his respects, and asked for her blessings to find Sita. Pleased, but smitten, Parvati was happy that Shiva was correct in his belief.

Valiant, but defeated, he lay, waiting, O Rama, O Rama,
An earlier time, safe, would be Janaka's daughter,
Defeating death, he waited, Jatayu, for Dasaratha's son,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

A very little known fact about the Ramayana is the earlier story of Jatayu and his friendship with Dasaratha. In his famed battles before the birth of Rama, when he won acclaim for himself, Jatayu and Dasaratha had fought side by side. It was a significant moment, for Dasaratha had to rescue Kaikeyi, and was in danger of losing his own life, when Jatayu came to his rescue. In gratitude, Dasaratha made a solemn recognition, that Jatayu would be known as his younger brother.

Later, near modern Nashik and Tryambakeshwar, it is Jatayu who sees Ravana forcibly abducting Sita and getting away in the *Pushpaka Vimana*. Recognising the princess of Mithila, daughter of Janaka, and acclaiming her to be his daughter-in-law, since Dasaratha was his elder brother, as bounden duty, Jatayu attacks Ravana without worrying about winning the battle.

The battle, as everyone knows, is fierce, and Jatayu falls, mortally injured, while Ravana escapes with Sita, in a damaged *Pushpaka Vimana*. Rama and Lakshmana meet up with Jatayu, a few moments after they find some of Sita's jewellery fallen nearby. Suspecting Jatayu to have been responsible for Sita's disappearance, Rama is about to attack, while Lakshmana prevents him.

If it would have been a battle that was fought some decades ago, Jatayu tells Rama and Lakshmana, the result would have been different. Least realizing that it would have been a battle with Lankeshwara, and that he was the most powerful warrior of his times, Jatayu reminds Rama and Lakshmana of the earlier battles fought on the side of Dasaratha. He tells the brothers that he had delayed inevitable death until he could inform them about Sita's abduction by Ravana and having said so, he could go in peace, knowing that he did his duty.

they came visiting her, old as she was, worried,
starving, she had been, nothing but berries, her Rama,
he would not refuse, she knew, within her heart,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

She knew that they were coming. She had heard that Rama and Lakshmana were in the forests nearby and she had hoped that they would be able to visit her. She was too old, and she could not go out to meet them. She was not even able to go out and get food for herself. In her old age, and in her own way, she could only go and pick up berries lying on the grounds or in short bushes.

The story of Shabari, and her meeting with Rama and Lakshmana in the Ramayana is well known, even amongst those who have not read the great epic. It has become a cliché about the hospitality of India, that one would not ever refuse the opportunity of hosting someone, of welcoming visitors to the house, and sharing whatever food that there would be.

Shabari was blessed with divine vision, and she knew of the *avatar* of Vishnu, and that the princes, Rama and Lakshmana, were Nara and Narayana themselves. She was excited and was expecting their visit. But, she was worried, for she did not have anything to offer them. All she had with her were the berries picked up in the forests, and would that be sufficient?

Rama was content. Valmiki and later, Tulsidas, write of the love and affection of Shabari, to Rama as the *avatar* of Vishnu, and it would have been very difficult to determine if it was Rama, the human, or Vishnu, the divine, who accepted Shabari with all the love and affection that she wished to receive.

Upon Lakshmana's reluctance, Rama sits close to Shabari and accepts the pre-tasted and pre-chewed berries from her, and persuades his younger brother to do the same. To Shabari, watching Rama and Lakshmana sit together, silently and peacefully, in her house, it was as if her life had been meaningful.

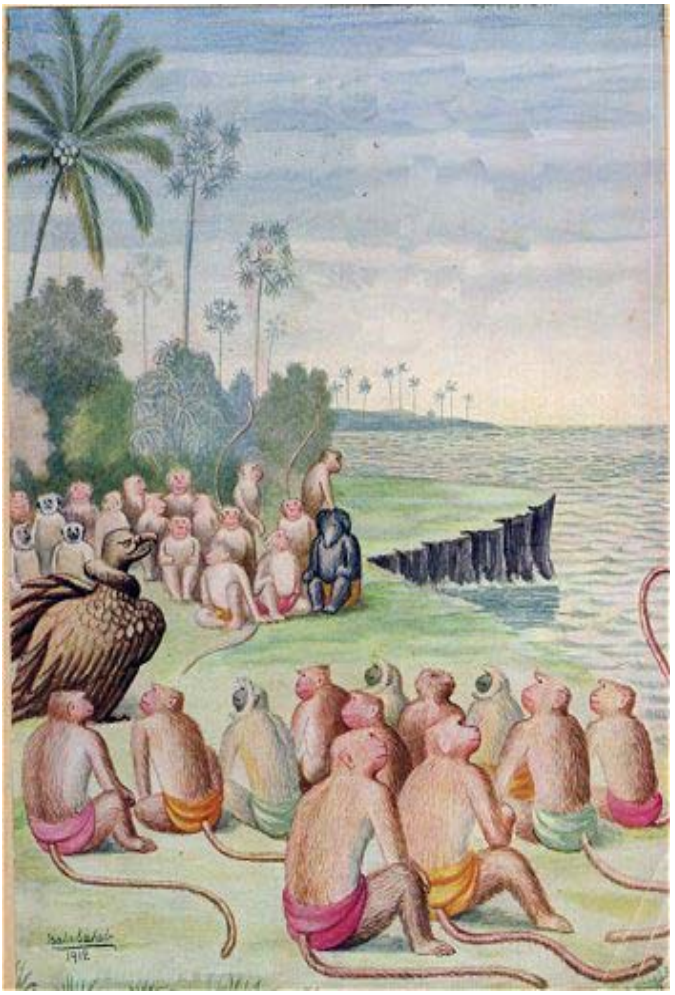
Chiranjeevi, that he would be, content in Rama,
Forever chanting, Raam, Raam, Raam, he meets you,
Immersed is he, forever as Shiva, in Narayana,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Not content to be immersed in chanting *raamanama*, Shiva does the inevitable. He decides that he has to be part of the aspect of the *avatar* of Rama, and establishes himself as *Vayuputra*, the son of Wind, the immortal Hanuman. While Vishnu as the *avatar* of Krishna or in the other *avatars*, retained the aspect of divine, this was not so, in the *avatar* of Rama. As Hanuman, however, Shiva established himself, and comes forth when Rama is in desperate need to find Sita.

Most *avatars* or aspects of Shiva are not as similar to the perspectives depicted in the *avatars* of Vishnu. As Hanuman, Shiva is accompanying Rama through the search, the battle at Kishkinda, and later, in the battles at Lanka. There are moments when Hanuman is asked by Rama to bring a *shivalinga* from Kailasa to be placed at Rameshwaram. Hanuman, the fastest, is slow in bringing the *shivalinga*, and it is the one established by Sita that has the place of prominence.

He is *chiranjeevi*, one of the immortals, and is thought to have come personally to help Tulsidas write the text of the Ramacharitamanas. He requests Rama to allow him the blessing of staying back in the human world, to be able to forever be in the bliss of chanting the name of Rama, and to be able to enjoy the joy for every single moment that he can.

Just as Shiva, immersed in the joy of Narayana forever, is thought to be the first and the greatest *vaishnava*, it is thus, the same with Hanuman, to be forever immersed in the chanting of the *raamanama*. As Shiva said to Parvati, "*Rama rama rameti, rame raame manorame, sahasranama tatulyam, ramanama varaanane*". The chanting of *raamanama*, with each single repetition, is equal to the chanting of a thousand names of Vishnu.



Jatayu, Jatayu, who spoke? Who among the vanaras?
O Sampati, it was I, Angada, but, a valiant hero was he,
battling Ravana, saving Rama's Sita, waited out death,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Sampati and Jatayu were brothers and had been together in their earlier years, until a foolish challenge to fly closer to the sun had separated them. Sampati, realizing that Jatayu who was flying higher, could be killed, went up higher and shielded his younger brother from the fury of the sun. Suffering from the scalding impact of the Sun's rays, Sampati's wings were damaged, and he fell down to the earth, but separated from Jatayu. They were never to meet again.

In his older days, Sampati, lived it out deep within a cave, near Rameswaram, in the company of his two sons, who would fly out to the seas and bring back some food when could get some. Not having had food for many days, Sampati was weakened and was waiting for some unsuspecting animals to come near his cave. At that moment, the group of vanaras, comprising Angada, Hanuman and Jambavan, came to rest near the mouth of the cave of Sampati.

The vanaras were tired, having gone out in search of Sita, and were scared to return to Kishkinda and face the anger of Sugreeva. Angada, son of Vali, lamented that it would be better to die in the service of Rama, than to die at the hands of Sugreeva, and be known forever, as had Jatayu. On hearing the name of his brother being spoken, Sampati rushed out of the cave, asking, Jatayu! Jatayu! Who spoke my brother's name?

Angada replied, and explained to Sampati about the battle fought by Jatayu against Ravana, and of his death at the hands of Rama. Later, the vanaras, led by Jambavan, and Hanuman helped Sampati conduct the prayers in memory of Jatayu and consecrated the offerings near Rameswaram. It is Sampati who points out to the Vanaras of Ravana's flight direction to Lanka.

you will not know about your birth, yourself,
thus said Garuda, amidst Vanaras, Jambavantha,
you, who are Nara and Narayana, my Vishnu,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Brought down by the serpent-like arrows of Meghnad, son of Ravana, both Rama and Lakshmana are helpless and are unable to get out of the tight strands wound around them. The snake-like strands are very powerful and are immune to all the attempts by the vanaras, including Sugreeva, Hanuman, Angada and Jambavan. Vibheeshana tries his best, seeking the help of those among his people who know how to counter such powers, but fails to free the two princes.

The vanaras confer in vain, and the expert among them on medicinal plants wonders if Hanuman would have to fly out to the Himalayas to search for some special herbs to be brought back for treatment and an attempt to free Rama and Lakshmana from the power of the serpent-like arrows and strands that bound them. They seemed to be dying and it seemed all in vain. They had come all this far, and foolishly challenged the Ravana, the most powerful of all. If Rama and Lakshmana were to be defeated, Ravana would wipe out the Vanara race.

Garuda appears at that very moment, who, like Shiva, was impatiently watching the unfolding of the life of Rama and his travels and troubles as a human. In a very brief moment, Garuda breathes over Rama and Lakshmana, and the snakes, fearful of the son of Vinata, slither away in terror and liberate the young princes.

In reply to a question, Garuda answers Rama, that you would not recognize me, O Rama, for you do not know about your birth. With Lakshmana, as Narayana and Nara, you will soon cease with this mortal shell and return to your eventual destination. We would meet again. Saying thus, Garuda flies away to meet with the sage-crow, Kakabhushundi, and questions, why could Narayana, the most powerful, liberate himself?

his brother had fallen, how could he return?
Sita, beloved, rescued, upon victory in battle,
O Hanuman, sought Rama, of human futility,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Lakshmana had been felled by the powerful arrows of Meghnad, son of Ravana. It was for a reason that he was also known as Indrajit, for he had achieved victory in battle over Indra, the King of Gods. Even Ravana had not been able to defeat Indra. The King of Lanka was very proud of his son, the most accomplished amongst all his brothers and sons. He was equal and more devoted in worship to Shiva and had received his blessings in the form of many super weapons.

Rama was down with despair. Of what purpose would be a victory over Ravana accomplish now? What if he were to rescue Sita and bring her out of Ravana's clutches? How could he return to Ayodhya without Lakshmana? What would he say to Kausalya, his mother, and to Sumitra, Lakshmana's mother? How could he face the people of Ayodhya, if he could not protect the brother who had given up every right and comfort to accompany him in exile? The most dutiful of all, Lakshmana.

Seeking out Hanuman, he cried in despair. O Hanuman, said Rama, how can I go back to Ayodhya now? I should not have allowed him in battle against the powerful Ravana and Meghnad. Sugreeva and Vibheeshana had spoken of their powers, and had also described the super weapons that they had. He is fallen there, his life going out of him now. Our best efforts have been in vain.

All these armies, all these victories, gaining back Sita, defeating Ravana and Meghnad, and winning these battles, would have no meaning in place of losing Lakshmana. I should not have been so foolish, said Rama to Hanuman, I should have insisted that you should have just brought out Sita on your own, and this battle would not have to be fought in this manner. You alone would have been enough to rescue Sita.

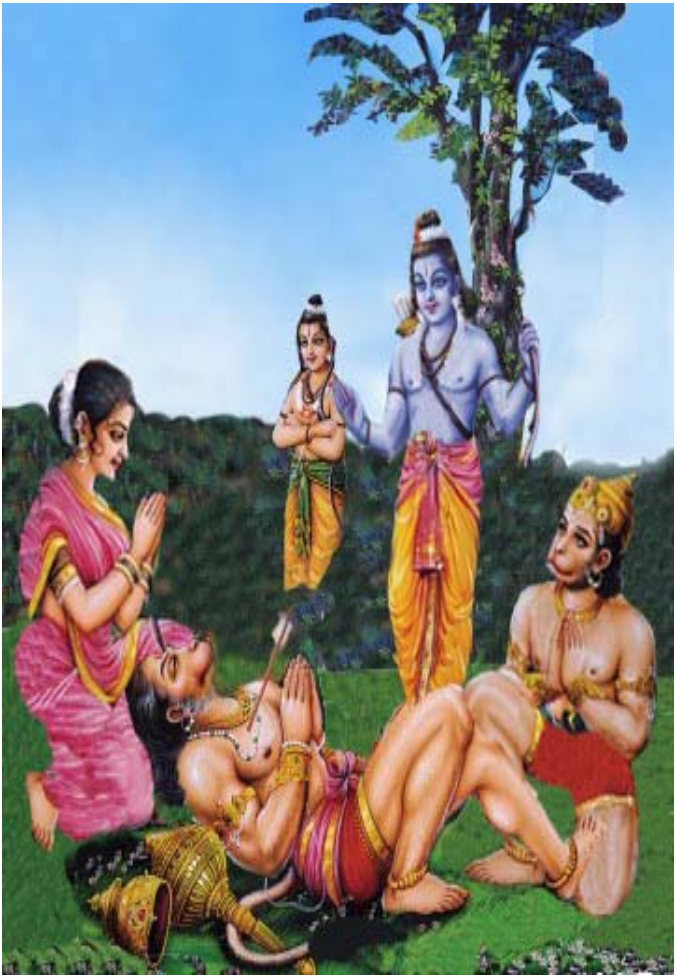
O Shiva, do you cheat me then, of my sons and brothers?
You favour him, more than me, Ayodhya's prince, Rama,
Kailasa to Lanka, my defeat, O Eshwara, your design...
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Ravana is known to be one of the most favoured devotees of Shiva. The *Shiva taandava stotram* is thought to have been composed by Ravana in appealing to him to forgive his errors in an attempt to disturb the peace of Kailasa. He is also mentioned in many stories in bringing the *shivalinga* to Lanka to be established in the temples. To this day, there is a pilgrimage to five sacred Shiva temples in Lanka, *Pancha Eshwara Sthalam*, that were thought to have been consecrated by Ravana himself.

To the end of the battle with Rama, a distraught Ravana seeks out Shiva in sadness and anger, complaining that it was not fair that the prince of Ayodhya was being favoured over the the king of Lanka. What had Rama done, asked Ravana, other than to beg for favours of Shiva at Rameswaram? Had he not broken the great bow of Shiva? Did Shiva favour him for such impudence? Then, how did his attempt to conquer Kailasa become a wrong deed? Why did Shiva cheat Ravana, thus?

Every aspect of good and bad, action and reaction, from his earlier stay in Kailasa, and being sent away to Lanka, and of the warnings from Mareecha, Mandodari and Vibeeshana, the stealthy manner by which Lakshmana was able to kill Meghnad, seemed to be part of a design of Maheshwara himself, in destroying Ravana.

Ravana had lost everyone. All his brothers and his sons, except for Atikaya. Before the final battle, Ravana sought Shiva, and spoke, O Shiva, you know of Ravana of earlier times. I will seek defeat because you desire it to be. I will not come to you to seek favour again. I know that you have blessed Rama with victory. He could not have won this war without your help. I shall seek victory in my defeat. This war shall never be forgotten.



challenged in conduct, forever, Vali's passing,
his own arrow, not seeking the garland of Sugreeva,
never forgiven, even by Ravana's killing, O Janaki,
within themselves, invoked the other, in love...

Upon the defeat of Ravana, and the rescue and trial by fire of Sita, the armies of Sugreeva and Rama and Lakshmana begin to return to Ayodhya. Before leaving Lanka, they worship together with Vibeeshana to Shiva at modern-day Muneeswaram, one of the *Pancha Eshawaram* temples, north of today's Colombo. Sita questions Rama upon his actions and wonders if the war and deaths were worth his intent in saving one woman.

Rama is perturbed, but begins to think about his actions. Here, at Muneeswaram, he wonders about the death of Ravana, a great devotee of Shiva. Intent on penance, he worships Maheshwara, and seeks forgiveness. In answer to Sita, he replies, that he can perhaps be forgiven for his actions in battle, for he is a prince of Ayodhya, and would be a king, and it is required that he wage war.

In answer to Sita, he says, that he could also perhaps be forgiven for killing Ravana, for it was required. His actions, beyond the abduction of Sita, had been known to have required retribution in the manner of kings and warriors. This was not a devotee of Shiva who would one day suddenly abdicate his throne and walk away.

But, one action would always be placed against him, forever, as the war against Ravana would be spoken about by people, it would be Rama's action in killing Vali in order to help Sugreeva that would be placed against him. Nobody, not even those closest to him, would ever forgive Rama for having killed Vali in stealth to aid a person who wanted to be king.

O Janaki, laments Rama, it was by intent and design that he had killed Vali from hiding. The manner, in which he had asked Sugreeva to wear a garland of flowers, would always be proof that he could also be guilty of wrong judgement and action. His arrow had killed Vali.